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The purpose of this study was to examine *Solace*, a musical composition for wind ensemble, by Steven Bryant composed for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Wind Ensemble and premiered at the 2013 College Band Directors National Association National Conference. Through a conductor's analysis and performance guide, the author provided insight and background knowledge to all future performers and interpreters of the work through unique first hand accounts from commission to premiere performance.

The research method included three processes: 1. A detailed analysis of the musical score, 2. The observation of rehearsals and recording sessions during preparation for the premiere performance of *Solace* by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Wind Ensemble, Kevin M. Geraldi, conductor, 3. Extensive interviews of Steven Bryant, composer and Kevin M. Geraldi, conductor. Through examination of prior research on electro-acoustic works for wind ensemble, the author examined *Solace* within those constructs. Because of the blurring of lines between electronics and acoustic sound, the author further identified *Solace* as a unique musical composition within the electro-acoustic genre.

STEVEN BRYANT'S *SOLACE*: A CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE

by

Justin C. Davis

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Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

To God, my parents, my sister, all my family and Sara for their constant support.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by JUSTIN C. DAVIS has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____
John R. Locke

Committee Members _____
Kevin M. Geraldi

_____
Carole J. Ott

_____
Jennifer S. Walter

_____
Date of Acceptance by Committee

_____
Date of Final Oral Examination

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, METHOD AND RELATED LITERATURE

Steven Bryant describes his musical and compositional goals as "pure drama."[1] He asserts that his music will "jump off the page"[2] and grab the audience, taking them on the same journey that he experienced creating the music. Dramatic journey and formal architecture are the primary concerns for Bryant.[3] If these goals are communicated to the audience in a visceral manner, whereby they are compelled to jump out of their seat with excitement, then Bryant feels his music has transcended the gap between composer and listener.[4] The listeners have "no other desire, but to listen."[5] Through this process, the author has found these goals to be paramount in Bryant's work *Solace* for wind ensemble and electronics, completed in 2012. In addition to providing a thorough analysis and performance guide, the writer will demonstrate that Bryant achieves his goal of drama in *Solace* by utilizing standard musical composition practices in a new synthesized manner of acoustic and electronic sounds.

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[1] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Jamie Nix, "Steven Bryant's *Ecstatic Waters* for Wind Ensemble and Electronics: Compositional and Performance Perspectives for Conductors" (DMA diss., University of Miami, 2010), 52, accessed September 11, 2012, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
[4] Ibid, 53.
[5] Matthew McCutchen, "An Examination of the History and Winning Pieces of the National Band Association's Composition Contest: 1977-2008" (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 2009), 35, accessed June 20, 2013, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

Guiding Questions

The scope of this document is focused only on *Solace* as one specific piece in Bryant's compositional output; however, other pieces that have direct connection and influence upon this new work will be discussed. Acknowledging these connections as viable, guiding questions for the project helped frame the topic and will be addressed throughout the paper. These questions were:

1) What are the musical elements within *Solace* on which Bryant based the work?
2) What outside musical influences led to the compositional choices in this piece?
3) What compositional styles or techniques were utilized in creating *Solace*?
4) What are the challenges of working with the electronics in this piece?
5) What information can be transferred directly to *Solace* from study or familiarity with Bryant's other acoustic and electro-acoustic[6] works?
6) What are the musical goals for the piece as seen by composer and conductor?
7) What are the most effective rehearsal methods for this work?
8) What, if any, challenges to individual players or sections are presented by the composition itself?
9) What information and process is needed for the conductor to learn the work, and what choices about conducting are pertinent?

[6] "Electro-acoustic" for the purposes of this document is defined by the author as music that contains both acoustic sounds from live performers and pre-recorded electronics.

Method

The research method is comprised of three processes: 1. The detailed analysis of the musical score including form, melody, harmony, style and other musical elements. 2. The observation of rehearsals and recording sessions during preparation for the premiere performance of *Solace* by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Wind Ensemble, Kevin M. Geraldi, conductor. Access to these early rehearsals gave this researcher an opportunity to reflect on and analyze both the finished product of *Solace* and the growth and development of the piece. 3. Extensive interviews of Steven Bryant, composer and Kevin M. Geraldi, conductor. These interviews were designed to gain insight into the creative and collaborative process between composer, conductor and the music itself. Bryant's own words are used as a primary source throughout the document to support the author's original research.

A consent form[7] was created by the writer and completed for all parties. All research using primary source interview material from Mr. Bryant and Dr. Geraldi falls outside the boundaries of the Institutional Review Board research parameters for human subjects.[8]

Related Literature

Related literature is limited as *Solace* is a new composition and this document represents the first scholarly research on the piece. As stated in the guiding questions, relevant compositions by Bryant may impact the history of this new work. The pieces

[7] See Appendix A.
[8] UNCG Institutional Review Board, e-mail message to author, November 26, 2012.

that are pertinent to this study include *Ecstatic Waters* (2008) and *The Machine Awakes* (2012). Along with *Solace,* these works constitute Bryant's electro-acoustic pieces for wind ensemble.[9]

Relevant writings and primary source history about Steven Bryant and his general compositional style have also been examined and integrated into this research. These include: a dissertation written in 2010 by Dr. Jamie L. Nix on Bryant's first work for winds and electronics, *Ecstatic Waters*, history and development of *The Machine Awakes* commission, a thesis completed in 2011 by Seth Wollam which focuses on four of Bryant's compositions (*ImPercyNations, Dusk, Suite Dreams* and *Concerto for Wind Ensemble*), and a dissertation by Dr. Matthew McCutchen analyzing the winners of the National Band Association's William D. Revelli Composition Contest including Bryant's piece *Radiant Joy*.

In his 2010 doctoral dissertation "Steven Bryant's *Ecstatic Waters* for Wind Ensemble and Electronics: Compositional and Performance Perspectives for Conductors," Dr. Jamie Nix provided a thorough analysis of the piece in addition to a large biographical section on Steven Bryant that was previously unavailable to the scholarly community. A re-examination of *Ecstatic Waters* is not applicable to the scope of this document; however, the method and guiding questions Nix used were expanded upon for this study. In addition, many of the compositional styles, methods, and attributes of Bryant's music that Nix examined remain viable and are evident in *Solace*. Among these factors are his focus on musical drama, blurred melodic and harmonic lines that give

[9] Nix, "*Ecstatic Waters*", 41.

extension and growth to the form, and his approach to composition using the smallest musical elements, which then become the seeds for the piece.[11] Nix said that the electronics were "like an entire piece unto itself"[12] because they played such a new and visionary role in the soundscape of the work. Nix's research regarding Bryant's music and the history of electro-acoustic music have been integral to this study of *Solace*.

In 2012, Bryant composed another electro-acoustic work for wind ensemble: *The Machine Awakes*. While written for young band and electronics, it employs the same level of artistry and compositional elements as *Ecstatic Waters*. *The Machine Awakes* was composed prior to *Solace* and, while less technically challenging, study of it was beneficial for this document. This piece was commissioned by a consortium of twenty ensembles, led by Arris Golden of Gravelly Hill Middle School in Efland, North Carolina.[13]

Seth Wollam wrote a masters thesis in 2010 about Steven Bryant and his works for winds entitled *Steven Bryant: An Analysis and Comparison of Works for Wind Band*. By accurately reinforcing points of Bryant's compositional techniques and background as well as his status among modern composers, Wollam's work relates to this study of

[11] Nix, "*Ecstatic Waters*", 52.
[12] Ibid, 95.
[13] Steven Bryant, "The Machine Awakes", accessed June 24, 2013, http://www.stevenbryant.com/the-machine-awakes.php.

Solace. Although Wollam weaves connections between all four of the Bryant pieces that he analyzes, none of these pieces pertain directly to this document.[14]

In 2009, Dr. Matthew McCutchen produced a dissertation examining the history of the National Band Association's William D. Revelli contest and the winning pieces of that contest from 1977-2008. Pertinent to this current study is McCutchen's discussion of Bryant's winning composition from 2007 entitled *Radiant Joy*. This piece is strikingly different from *Solace*; however, *Radiant Joy* stays true to the composer's primary goal of communicating to audience and performer utilizing small musical material, and flow of harmony and melody as Bryant states in the following quotation:

> Radiant Joy was my first new work for winds after two and a half years away, and one that I hope is equal to its title in character and purity of intent. It comes after a difficult period in my personal life, and thus its character was something of a surprise to me. This work began life as a strict, 12-tone, serialized creature modeled on Webern - I wanted something sparse and tightly constructed (in harmonic and intervallic terms), while still retaining a vital rhythmic pulse. After several sketches that ended in anger and frustration, I realized I was metaphorically banging my head against the creative wall, and perhaps I should stop forcing this music into existence with a prescriptive process, and simply listen inwardly to what I actually wanted to hear. The result is simultaneously the opposite of what I was originally trying to create, and also its direct realization - the vital rhythmic pulse is still prominent, but the harmonic materials veered toward the language of 70s/80s funk/jazz/fusion (at least, that's what I've been told). Regardless, the piece is intended to emanate joy and 'good vibes' (literally the vibraphone is critical to the piece!), for the performers, the audience, and the composer![15]

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[14] Seth Wollam, "Steven Bryant: An Analysis and Comparison of Works for Wind Band" (master's thesis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2010), 1-6, accessed June 20, 2013, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

[15] Steven Bryant, "Radiant Joy", accessed June 26, 2013, http://www.stevenbryant.com/radiantjoy-we.php.

The present study, although focused on a new work for wind ensemble and electronics, is indebted to the related literature before it and to those authors. The scholarship served as background knowledge for the researcher and all future conductors who prepare *Solace*. As evidenced by the prior works and scholarship noted above, *Solace* is not an isolated work but rather a construct of Bryant's other acoustic and electro-acoustic compositions.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS

Commissioning

Solace was commissioned at the request of a consortium,[16] led by Dr. John R. Locke and Dr. Kevin M. Geraldi, for the performance at the 2013 national convention of the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Wind Ensemble.

Bryant became aware of the opportunity for this commission in November 2009, when he was in residence at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) for a performance of *Ecstatic Waters*. In June 2009, Drs. Locke and Geraldi had learned that UNCG would be the host school for the 2013 CBDNA National Conference. Locke shared in an email with the author that "Bryant was very interested even then in the possibility of composing a work for the UNCG ensemble."

The singular parameter from the consortium leaders was for Bryant to compose a piece of about 12 minutes in duration. The choice to utilize electronics was Bryant's, and this choice came with some artistic hesitation. The concern for Bryant was that the newpiece not be considered a sequel to *Ecstatic Waters* when conductors learned of the use of electronics.[17]

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[16] See Appendix B for a listing of consortium members.
[17] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.

As the parts of the program came together, the conductors decided that Bryant's piece would be second on their program, between a short opening fanfare piece and Stravinsky's monumental *Symphony of Psalms*. According to Locke, Bryant's place on the program meant a great deal to the composer, as he wanted the "mood or affect" of the piece to segue with the pieces on either side of it. In interviews and email exchanges with the writer, Bryant spoke frequently about the importance of this "mood." The contrast of opposing extremes is what Bryant desired from this piece, as he does for all of his music. He also wanted his piece to be part of the overarching contrasts of the complete UNCG Wind Ensemble program at the conference. The primary importance of evolving musical affect to Bryant and his music can be ascertained by this focus on drama so early in the compositional process.

In composing *Solace*, Bryant said he was deeply influenced by the film music of American composer Trent Reznor.[18] Reznor composed the soundtracks to the movies *The Social Network* and *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*. Each of these has achieved notoriety, with the former earning an Academy Award for Best Score[19] and the latter a Grammy award for Best Score Soundtrack to Visual Media.[20] Reznor is perhaps best

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[18] Ibid.
[19] "Oscar Awards," accessed July 24, 2013, http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org/ampas_awards/DisplayMain.jsp?curTime=1381984005789.
[20] "Grammy Nominees Search," accessed July 24, 2013, http://www.grammy.com/nominees/search?artist=Reznor&field_nominee_work_value=&year=All&genre=11.

known as the leader of industrialist rock group Nine Inch Nails, and this music has been a major influence in Bryant's life since he was a teenager.[21]

According to Bryant, he listened to Nine Inch Nails and the soundtrack to *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* as he composed *Solace* during the summer of 2012. The bass line progression and the use of half-steps and tri-tones in the tone row that forms the basis of *Solace* can be traced to Reznor's music. Creative and transformative electronic sounds fill Reznor's soundtracks, and the listener is exposed to music seemingly without barlines. These musical influences both give perspective and context for the dramatic flow of Bryant's piece and are a resource every conductor should explore.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation of this work follows standard wind band instrumentation with a few additions, most notably the keyboard player:

Flute I (doubles piccolo)-II-III
Oboe I-II
Bassoon I-II
B-flat Clarinet I-II-III
B-flat Bass Clarinet
Alto Saxophone I (doubles soprano)-II
Tenor Saxophone
Baritone Saxophone
B-flat Trumpet I-II-III
Horn in F I-II-III-IV
Trombone I-II-III
Euphonium I-II
Tuba I-II
Contrabass
Piano

[21] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.

Keyboard (to trigger the electronics via MIDI keyboard and computer)
Timpani
Percussion 1: Crotales, Glockenspiel
Percussion 2: Vibraphone
Percussion 3: Crotales (shared with Percussion 1), suspended cymbals, suspended crash cymbal(large)
Percussion 4: Tam-tam
Percussion 5: Bass drum

Compositional Process and Perspectives

Bryant's compositional process is centered on achieving "great use from as small a musical element" as possible.[22] He took these small pieces and composed in a very improvisational manner. Bryant morphed his improvisational sound ideas into musical notation utilizing various computer software programs and tools.

The main software program Bryant used was Digital Performer™. This software is a digital audio workstation with MIDI sequencing capability. Bryant used this software to combine musical sound and electronic effects from the inception of the composition process. As ideas become more concrete, the MIDI data was exported to Finale™ music notation software where Bryant formalized the composition and his choices in orchestration.

When asked if he orchestrated these ideas as he composed, Bryant said that he "often will make notes on what instrument [he wants] to play what line, but starts with a general motive."[23] These motives expanded into the large overriding form of the work.

[22] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.
[23] Ibid.

The effect on the performers and audience remained the focus and primary motivator for Bryant's composition.

Despite an inspired creative approach, a high level of formalized craft exists in *Solace*. Bryant states his craft is "a hopeful by-product of years of study, which comes forth from whatever is being created in the moment."[24] The end product over the method is what Bryant chooses to prioritize. He said he does not wish to know about the technical aspects of his music, for fear it may alter his process.[25] Conversely, the process for the conductor and performer relies on a knowledge and awareness of these technical considerations. The knowledge of the inner workings of a Bryant piece combined with a pairing of the desired musical effect created by Bryant's electro-acoustic compositional choices encourages both informed and inspired performance.

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

When analyzing Bryant's music, the conductor must consider linear motion and voice leading as equal to, or in some cases, superior to the vertical harmony. In addition to the emphasis on melodic line, the dramatic feeling of the piece is of paramount importance to Bryant.[26] Bryant communicates that drama by balancing the harmonic tension of the linear and vertical sounds along a dynamic musical path. As seen in figure 1, Bryant uses a nine-pitch tone row as the basis for *Solace*:

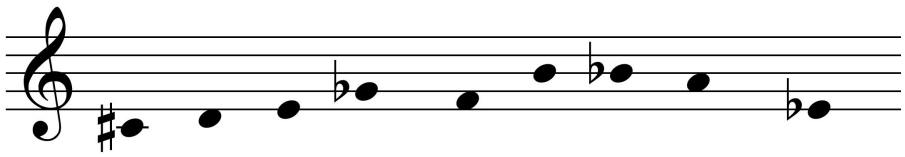

Figure 1. *Solace* tone row. Used with permission, Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012.

Solace is not a serial work. Instead, *Solace* is tonal music that utilizes a tone row for its melodic content. This row is presented in a variety of ways, ranging from the prime form in its entirety to an abbreviated version comprised of just a few pitches. In this document, these abbreviations will be described by the number of notes used, followed by "-row," for example, 5-row to describe using the first five pitches of the row.

[26] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.

These shortened statements of the row are interesting from a theoretical perspective and because they provide interpretive guidance for the conductor as to which voices should predominate in thick, loud textures. Melodically, Bryant uses multiple pitch sources: full statements of the row, abbreviated versions of the row, and also new pitches that connect to the row through scalar motion. The way Bryant harmonizes the tone row is relevant and must be taken into consideration. However, the key factor is the relationship and transformation of the tone row to all other elements of the work, through layering and ornamentation.

Bryant's composition can be divided into two large sections: the beginning to measure 158, and measure 159 to the end. Each of the two halves has similar architecture by progressing from a quieter, chamber-like setting to a loud arrival followed immediately by a quiet respite in reduced instrumentation. Despite originating with the same tone row, the affect and form of each half is different enough to warrant an AB designation. The piece is in simple continuous binary form cadencing on an incomplete harmonic state of F-sharp major (secondary dominant to E) at the conclusion of the A section and arriving on a final cadence of E major at the conclusion of the B section.

The A Section: Measures 1-158

Measures 1-62

In measures 1 through 62, Bryant states the row and develops it using a variety of techniques. Bryant introduces the row in measure one with a sforzando 4-row statement

in the mallet percussion. This sounds simultaneously with a sustained C-sharp[28] in high flutes and Harmon-muted trumpets. In the opening two phrases of the piece, Bryant uses a flute and clarinet duet in octaves to quietly announce portions of the row. From this early stage in the piece, it becomes obvious that the work is not composed in purely serial style, as Bryant utilizes both row and non-row pitches. In measure 15, the duet breaks from the row after the F and moves to an A-flat. This adjusts the melody to a higher register and allows it to temporarily tonicize F-sharp in measure 22. Here, Bryant repeats the opening flourish, but this time on F-sharp. Bryant frequently takes these vertical sound groupings, like the one at measure 22, and extends them over time to expand the harmony. The stacked F-sharp, G, A, B that the mallet percussion plays in measure 22 is elongated in the consequent measures of the phrase by the flutes and oboes. In effect, this takes the ringing from the metallic percussion and prolongs those pitches through a different "color lens" using orchestration.

The stacked pitches sound simultaneously and then dissipate back into a C-sharp by use of a descending C-sharp minor scale written in multiple voices in varying rhythms. This scale transforms the harmony and creates a blurry dissonance that ripples downward to a pianissimo dynamic. Utilizing a four-note ascending line in the soli duet, which could be analyzed as scale degrees 5, 6, 7, and 1 of C-sharp natural minor, Bryant returns to the C-sharp flourish found in measure 28. The ideas of rising and falling motion, and the contrast of clear and blurred harmonies, recur throughout the work.

[28] In the score, Bryant frequently uses enharmonic spellings of pitches. The author will refer to enharmonic pitches interchangeably, except where one or the other gives greater meaning to the harmonic or melodic content of the music.

The brief transition from measure 28 to measure 35 contains another important element of blend and blur found in this piece: the hybrid electro-acoustic instrument. At measure 34 the solo flute, now removed from the duet with the clarinet, plays an ascending seventeen-note passage which diminuendos from a pianissimo dynamic to niente upon its arrival at measure 35. This is echoed in the electronic part occurring one-quarter beat later and lasting into the first part of measure 35. The dissipation of the acoustic flute sound into the electronic echo of itself creates the hybrid electro-acoustic flute. Bryant creates these blended instruments in the flute, clarinet, saxophone and Harmon muted trumpet voices at various parts of the work by recording samples from the UNCG players who premiered the piece. These samples were then integrated into the electronics track to serve as extensions or duplications of the acoustic instrument. This isolated example is representative of a larger idea in the piece: equality and balance between acoustic and electronic sounds. In several places, the acoustic sound is extended or transformed by the electronic sound, breaking down the traditional barrier between acoustic and electronic, blending the two into new sounds, and making both equally important.

While the vibraphone is still sounding the pitch cluster of C-sharp, D, E, F-sharp (the first four pitches of the row), the clarinet section at measure 35 presents a phrase beginning with a C-sharp minor chord. This relationship to the opening key of C-sharp minor is the only connection to the row. Bryant breaks off and writes an ascending scale similar to E Phrygian while harmonizing it with overlapping suspensions and close harmonies. The harmonies in these measures weave in and out of consonance and

unrelated dissonances. This section moves from the starting C-sharp minor harmony through a morphing chord progression, obtained by moving one chord voice in half steps and sustaining the other voices as indicated in figure 2.

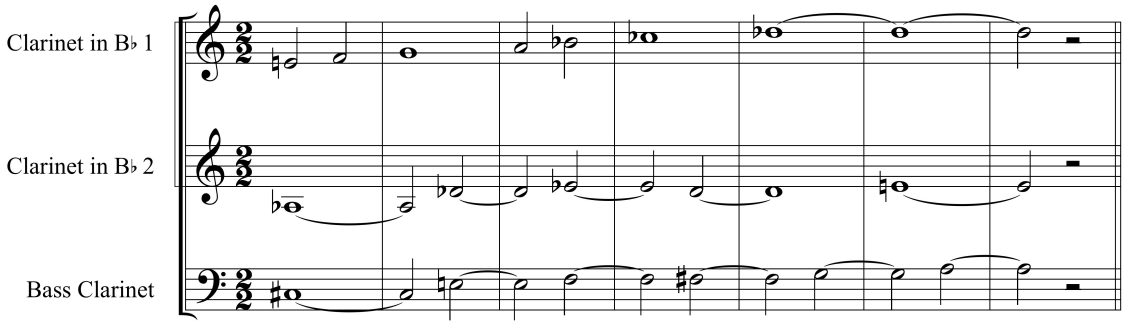

Figure 2. *Solace* measures 35-41, excerpted. Shown here in concert pitch to accentuate the harmonic structure. Used with permission, Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012.

The goal is not to put these harmonies into a Roman numeral analysis system; rather, to utilize the harmonic underpinning to understand Bryant's intended expressive effect. By presenting these harmonies in this manner, the piece moves slowly through a progression that is not readily apparent on the surface.

At measure 42, Bryant begins again with a perfect fourth interval of C-sharp and F-sharp and through the same technique of moving one voice in half steps while sustaining the others, the harmony descends slowly to an arrival on C-sharp and G-sharp at measure 49. Now using alto saxophone, piano, contrabass, and bassoons with the clarinet family, Bryant continues this transformation of harmonies until measure 56. Measures 56-58 can be considered a transition, which arrives at C-sharp minor harmony at measure 59, a recap of the beginning with slightly different orchestration.

Another of Bryant's frequently used compositional tools is found in measure 56. This tool is an extension of a scalar passage using fast moving notes and changing orchestration. In this instance, Bryant uses a simple ascending D Mixolydian scale and ends on the perfect fifth interval found at measure 59. He extends this moment through creative use of color shifts achieved by his changing orchestration. For example, in measure 56 with the baritone saxophone, Bryant writes the ascending scale starting on F-sharp. As the scale reaches its tonic, he continues it by adding higher-pitched instruments. As the line rises, some of these instruments sustain their arrival pitch while others continue the scale. This combination of unison and octave scales with sustained chord clusters achieves the dual purpose of relating to the opening music and moving forward to the cadence. Reversing the blurring technique from earlier in the work enhances the drama of this cadence point at measure 59.

From measures 56 to 59, Bryant writes different starting tones of the same scale in varying rhythmic combinations to create aural ambiguity, in ascending contour, with a crescendo and an increasing number of players. This change brings added volume and allows the ensemble to use the natural orchestration and register of the music to achieve the crescendo. The electronic sounds that sustain during this development of measures 35-59 are also of note. Bryant begins with just wind noise and adds static that increases in presence and volume to measure 59. Also at measure 59, the electronic part encounters a metamorphosis, as the static and wind now are combined into a bubbling drone.

At measure 59, Bryant abbreviates the opening material as a brief, four-measure transition. Bryant uses color to provide contrast through muted trumpets alternating from

a Harmon mute with hand covering the stem, to opening the hand where indicated. This technique is written in a sequenced fashion in measure 60 to sustain the effect.

Measures 63-82

In measure 63, Bryant begins a different harmonic support structure for the embellished melodic treatment of the tone row. What is unique about this portion of the piece is the neo-Riemannian treatment of the chords that the trombones play.[29] The melody begins in a similar fashion with the first four pitches of the row, but continues onward to form a unique melody separate from the constraints of the tone row. Before describing what occurs here, a brief explanation of neo-Riemannian theory is necessary.

Hugo Riemann (1849-1919) was a 19th century theorist who subscribed to the belief in dualism of tonality, where major and minor triads are inversely related.[30] In 1987, theorist David Lewin wrote a book entitled *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* where he, along with others, created a neo-Riemannian approach to musical analysis to mesh with the highly chromatic music of Wagner and his contemporaries.[31] This system involves a complex organization of labeled transformations. These are analyzed by how many semitones shift, and in which chord member(s) the shifts occur, instead of in a traditional tonic relationship. This research led

[29] Neo-Riemannian referencing Hugo Riemann (1849-1919), music theorist.
[30] Richard Cohn, "Neo-Riemannian Operations, Parsimonious Trichords, and Their 'Tonnetz' Representations,"*Journal of Music Theory* 41, no. 1 (Spring, 1997): 1-2, accessed June 24, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/843761.
[31] Ramon Satyenda, "An Informal Introduction to Some Formal Concepts from Lewin's Transformational Theory," *Journal of Music Theory* 48, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 118, accessed June 25, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27639378.

later theorists to consider the voice leading itself, and the relationships between chords based on these shifts. A full transformational analysis of *Solace* is not within the scope of this research; however, the shifting of one or more chord members by semitone or whole tone while other members remain static does occur in Bryant's piece. With this awareness of shifting chord voices we return to Bryant's work.

The harmony at measure 63 and onward through measure 77 moves between closely related chords. These chords are not related by tonic or traditional progressions, but instead relate to each other by a shifting of one chord member up or down by semitone. The compositional technique used by Bryant is noteworthy because of the way it highlights the harmonic motion. As the score notates, the trombonists are to glissando between the shifting harmonies, taking up the entire measure. This harmonic shift is especially noticeable at measure 69 when all three voices shift down by semitone simultaneously. Bryant achieves a portamento harmonic shift by utilizing the entire measure to change chords.

As the phrase builds, in measures 76-78 Bryant returns to the stepwise ascent from earlier in the work. Scale degrees 5, 6, 7, and 1 ascend, but this time in the key of G# minor. This key center is best described as the root note of a pitch cluster containing G#, A, B, and C#, which Bryant lingers on in the transition to the next phrase at measure 83. He provides an added emphasis to these pitches utilizing the frequent color choice of Harmon-muted trumpets. The texture of the next section begins with a moment to clear out the soundscape, with just electronics remaining in measure 82 as an echo of the

Harmon-muted trumpet. This is another occurrence of the transforming and equalizing of acoustic and electronic sound, as with the flute earlier and the clarinets to come later.

Measures 83-113

Bryant begins the next segment of the work with a solitary C-sharp major chord at a piano dynamic. This chord is played by the piano alone, but is notated in the score to be "very full, warm, and audible to the back of the hall." The solo horn now states the melody first heard in the opening duet between clarinet and flute; however, this time the melody is extended. This 5-row statement breaks off into an echo in the third horn part in measure 91.

This transitory section is also developmental, as Bryant surrounds the longer half notes of the tone row with faster ascending flourishes in the woodwinds. In the clarinet, these are presented as ascending C-sharp Locrian scales, which are echoed in the electronics. The entrance of the C-sharp drone in the contrabass at measure 90, although piano in volume, provides both a consistent tuning pitch to all related pitches and a dissonant voice to pitches outside the C-sharp harmony. With each subsequent statement of the row in the horn and flute, Bryant adds one more note of the row before breaking off again into either a restatement from the beginning of the row or new material.

In measures 94-101, both the horn and flute state 6-row motives. These are punctuated with the woodwind flourishes as well as sforzando mallet percussion pitch clusters containing portions of the row. Bryant again sustains the drama by establishing

the row and then extending the number of pitches in the melody in each subsequent restatement.

From measures 100-114, the drama intensifies through combinations of earlier techniques and some new compositional procedures. Earlier techniques that continue include rapid scalar passages in saxophones, the tone row played in half and whole notes and the rhythmic stratification of the same pitches. This stratification occurs in measure 104 in the oboes and measure 109 in the clarinets. Bryant constructs the same notes of the row in each voice part, but layers them with differing rhythms sounding simultaneously which intensifies the blurring effect.

What is unique and new in this section is the entrance of the bassoons and timpani, marked to be in the background, subdued and blending with the sounding contrabass C-sharp drone. The bassoons begin with the C-sharp, but begin to break away from the drone, playing an ascending C-sharp Locrian scale building to a minor second interval of D and C-sharp in measure 109. This dissonance dissipates in a chromatic descent to measure 111. Here the trombone voices also contribute to this line, trading off a fourteen-measure C-sharp pedal point between trombone I and trombone II. To further draw attention to the dissonance created, the first trombone glissandos to D as the bassoons reach their minor second interval. This scalar ascent and glissando are marked piano in the score; however, to gain prominence, they should be increased to a level above the other accompanimental figures in this writer's opinion.

Bryant gives the first full quotation of the row in the oboe parts in measures 104-105. The quote is buried in the texture, but could be increased by just enough volume to

project through the flutes and horns in the higher register. The horn and flute line appears to be a canonic statement; however, the flutes break away into a higher, shimmering accompaniment figure instead of strictly echoing the horn. A linking feature in this developmental section is the acoustic static sounds provided by the saxophones and electronics. The flurry of trills is harmonically dissonant, and they match the effect of the "radio static" sounds in the electronic voice. This motive occurs four times, each time one dynamic louder and with more intensity as the motive extends in duration and range.

Throughout the piece, Bryant uses the C-sharp to signal the return of the row. In this section, he announces the row in the trumpets, which grow to a forte open Harmon mute sound in measure 108 before the bass clarinet and subsequently the other clarinets play the row in its full version. This is another rare occurrence where the row is presented in its prime form. Here the row is written twice through in ascending contour before it resolves to pitches outside the row. The measures from 109 to 111 are another illustration of how Bryant's music is a "sequence of episodic layers"[34] that are harmonically divergent from one another and presented in strata to create blur.

Measures 114-135

Although stated earlier as blurred layers, the row becomes clear in measure 114. The harmony appears as D-flat major; however, the listener will hear the root and fifth as prominent due to Bryant's orchestration. The only occurrence of the third of the chord (F3) is in the piano, thereby allowing the perfect fifth interval to be clearly heard. In this

[34] Kevin Geraldi (first conductor of *Solace*), interview by author, Greensboro, July 16, 2013.

section, Bryant disguises the tertian harmony of the piece through orchestration in order to convey openness, space, and strength.[35] This space allows the prime form tone row to grow and become clear. Bryant clearly presents the row in long half note values in unison and octaves with the bassoon 2 part, euphoniums, tubas, contrabass, and left hand of the piano. Written at a mezzo forte dynamic, the row is again pushed into the background, overshadowed by the forte melody in the trumpets. This music is presented much more quickly and forcefully. A prominent fanfare occurs with the intention of "every note clearly cut(ting) through the band."[36] The dialogue between trumpet 1 and trumpet 2 is first presented with Harmon mutes, giving a distant feel and pointed sound. The row is abbreviated during the melodic exchange. Further into the phrase, the second trumpet plays an 8-row statement; however, Bryant's pitch choices in the first trumpet part deviate more from the row. The vertical harmonies that ensue from the combination of the ground bass presentation of the row in the low voices and the trumpet fanfares create a layering of dissonant harmonies before arriving on C-sharp at measure 122.

Here Bryant restates the phrase but with some added elements and at a louder dynamic level intended to "amp up" the row.[37] First, by adding the full trombone section, bassoon section and both hands of the piano to the row, Bryant provides more depth to the sound. Second, the first note of the row is now harmonized by a perfect fifth interval, giving depth and power throughout the row. The trumpet melodic motives are repeated but without mutes and one dynamic louder. The opening phrase was originally eight

[35] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.
[36] Steven Bryant, *Solace*, score (Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012), measure 115.
[37] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.

measures long, but by gradually doubling the trumpet motive with the upper woodwinds, Bryant extends this imitated phrase to fourteen measures. In addition to adding the woodwind texture, the once static bass line breaks into contrapuntal motion against the moving trumpets and woodwinds. Four main contrapuntal lines[39] are orchestrated throughout the full ensemble, providing overlapping harmonies and dissonance. Each of these devices of phrase extension, orchestration and color add to the drama of the work.

At the height of this arrival at measure 136 on the C-sharp and G-sharp perfect fifth, the culmination of the first large section is delayed. Through staggering of the treble and bass voices combined with tam-tam on the arrival downbeat of measure 136, Bryant extends the drama. This extension in the brass is accentuated by a flurry of scalar passages in piccolo, flutes and piano. The row is presented as a 6-row in the trumpets and clarinets followed by a minor second descent by the low brass and horns from D-flat minor to C major harmony in measure 138. This is a restatement of measure 63 and the neo-Riemannian effect, but now in diminution as seen in figure 3.

[39] In measures 132-133, a fifth line appears in the trumpet 3, clarinet 3 and flute 3 parts. This exists to allow a sustaining of the A in measure 133 against the B in the other parts. In measure 134, these parts return to the second contrapuntal part found in the horns and other voices.

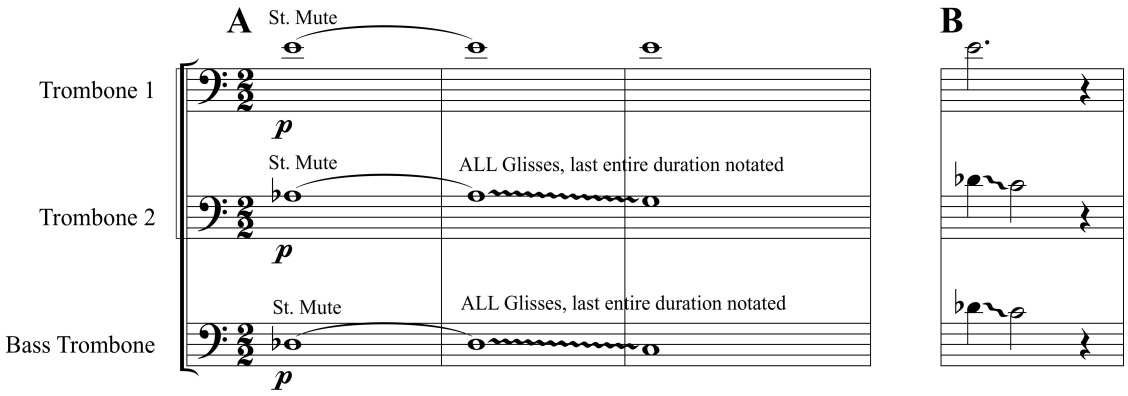

Figure 3. *Solace* measures 63-65 and 138. A is measures 63-65 while B is measure 138. This shows Bryant's use of rhythmic alteration. Used with permission, Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012.

The trumpets, which up to this point have been signaling C-sharp, follow this descent in the low brass with an accented C major chord. This D-flat to C motive, while brief, is important because it links two sections of the piece with motivic unity. Bryant enhances the foreground importance of the motive by writing glissing trombones and suspended cymbal crashes. By taking the augmented harmony (part A from figure 3) and presenting it later in a quicker rhythm (part B from figure 3), Bryant again increases musical drama.

As this phrase builds to the loud arrival of the first half, Bryant uses the full ensemble with electronics to drive the music to an extremely powerful and intense cadence. In measures 141 and 142, the electronic drone becomes a wall of sound as a descending bass line from A downward to D-Flat is presented with an ascending scalar grouping in the upper woodwinds and trumpets. Within this wide tessitura is a 9-row statement of the pitch row in saxophones, lower trumpets, horns, first trombone and euphonium. Once again, as Bryant approaches a cadence the vertical harmony moves in and out of brief consonant chords. These harmonies become more audible to the listener

through the *molto ritardando* into the cadence point at measure 143. This perfect fifth arrival is orchestrated in the lowest voices of the ensemble combined with a blended electronic sound of all registrations and colors. This sound morphs upon itself into a sustained D-Flat at measure 145, which lasts for about 27 seconds into the first epilogue.

Measures 146-158

Bryant's music relaxes into a thirteen-measure phrase utilizing just piano, contrabass and electronics. This phrase moves through a progression that anchors in B-flat minor and arrives in G-flat major. This arrival on a major VI harmony in B-flat minor also is a V/V (spelled as F-sharp major) in the ending key of E-major. Because the music does not resolve to B-major, the cadence does not function as a true secondary dominant. Rather, it provides an unsettled pause between the two halves of the work. The deceptive cadence and un-resolved secondary dominant serve as a structural marker for the overall piece.

The B Section: Measures 159-267

Measures 159-215

The second half of the piece begins similarly to the concluding phrase of the first half and is connected by an overlap of the electronic drone that fades to niente by measure 164. The harmony remains in B-flat minor and the texture is thin. In the phrases that follow until measure 215, a combination of four horns, two euphoniums and contrabass present a subdued statement of the tone row material. This music contains the

sole portion of the piece that is without any electronic sound. This emptying of the sound space for a brief 25 measures allows the acoustic sounds to be an intimate respite, and a calm place from which to start the second large build.

The music at measure 159 is a combination of harmonies around the tone row that is presented by the horn trio, frequently in its prime form. The three horn lines are both a combination of layered 9-rows, as well as moments where the music breaks away from the row as shown in figure 4.

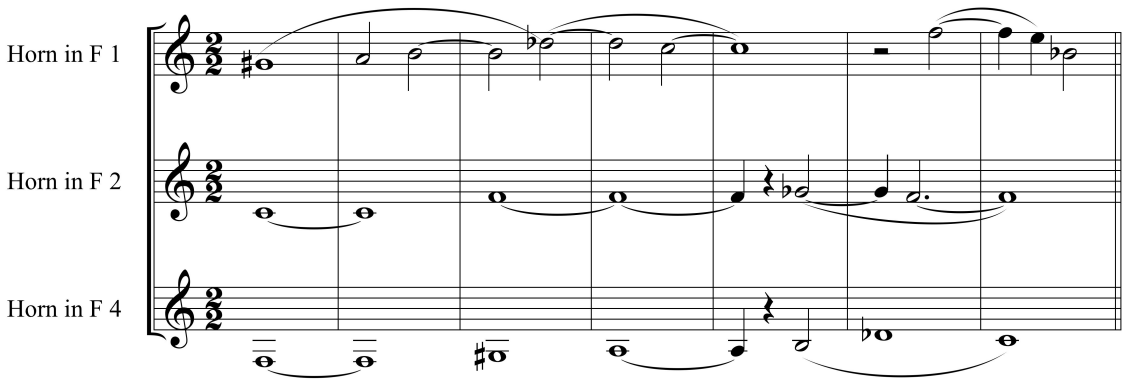

Figure 4. *Solace* measures 159-165. Transposed pitch. Used with permission, Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012.

To add support to the large form arch and avoid jarring the texture at measure 200, Bryant adds euphonium players at each subsequent phrase of this section.

Continuing with the same melodic material and adding depth to the orchestration with each phrase, Bryant incorporates the percussion beginning at measure 200. The suspended cymbal roll in measure 199 and bass drum "heartbeat" rhythm at measure 200 delineate the cadence and new phrase. In this phrase, certain pitches are sustained, thereby creating 3/2 bars and different resultant harmonies. At measure 213, Bryant

diverges from the row and builds an ascending three-measure transition into measure 216. This transposes the arrival cadence to the key of A-flat/G-sharp major (the fifth of the opening key of C-sharp minor).

Measures 216-254

In this section, the pulsating eighth notes create an increased sense of drive. This is where the energy for the second big ascent begins, and the electronics produce a sustained audio feedback that resonates through the texture. Statements of the row continue in the horns and lower trumpets, and the first trumpet projects through the band in measures 218 and 219 with an abbreviation of the row. This 4-row fanfare continues in the lower trumpet parts down an octave, but only includes pitches of the row through the F before it breaks away from the row and descends downward in whole steps. The harmonic motion in the lower voices descends from the A-flat harmony in measure 216 to the G-flat harmony found at measure 230. A glissando in the timpani and trombones embellishes this harmonic change. Percussion also enhances this cadence through cymbal and bass drum crescendi. The incessant eighth notes continue on G-flat briefly and the phrase progresses upward over four measures to A-flat minor harmony in the end of measure 233.

The harmonic marker points at 234 and 240 define a larger harmonic arch of the subdominant and dominant keys of C-sharp minor respectively. Although the harmony within these markers is not intended to be an 18th century harmonic progression, their existence and the examination of the root motion in the bass voices gives direction to the

linear motion of the phrase. At measure 234, a perfect-fifth cadence on F-sharp and C-sharp provides the foundation for another progression over six measures to return to G-Sharp/D-Sharp at measure 240. These markers infer a iv-V relationship to the opening key of C-sharp minor; however, Bryant's linear motion deceives this inference with a bass line descent to E at measure 242. This serves as harmonic foreshadowing to the two cadences in the relative major: E-major7 at measure 253 and E-major at the end of the piece. This culmination is once again delayed at measure 244, which enhances the drama Bryant desires at this point in the piece.

Before these cadences, Bryant utilizes another secondary dominant in a non-traditional manner at measure 244. In the phrases leading up to 244, Bryant alludes to E-major by alternating the E-major scalar portions with a chromatic descent that masks the harmony. As shown in figure 5, Bryant uses the D-sharp on beat 2 of measure 244 as a secondary dominant to the G-sharp minor first inversion chord in measure 245 instead of a leading tone in E:

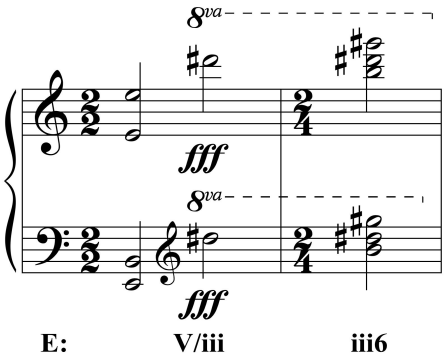

Figure 5. *Solace* measures 244-245. This is the piano part, which serves as a reduction, in concert pitch. Used with permission of Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012.

This measure is the only 2/4 measure in the piece, and while not lingering, it remains pivotally important in pacing the final long arrival. This harmony resolves to a root position G-sharp minor chord at measure 246 and the final drive to the cadence resumes after its secondary dominant delay. With more ensemble members pulsing the eighth note ostinato, Bryant's music grows increasingly loud with the electronics sounding at subwoofer-level low frequencies.

At measure 246, the work slowly descends 3-2-1 (G#-F#-E) in the bass with G-sharp and F-sharp prolonged lasting two measures. Upon arrival on the E in the bass, he extends the harmony on E for the last four measures. With the addition of a D-sharp Phrygian scale in the upper voices, which begins in the anacrusis to measure 247, Bryant builds harmonically to the upper D-sharp in the last two measures of the phrase. This D-sharp, while the tonic of the Phrygian mode, serves here as the leading tone of E-major and thereby creates an E-major seventh harmony. Once again, Bryant has capitalized on dissonance to achieve drama by combining a major seventh interval, nearly six octaves in range, with a thick texture at a *ffff* dynamic. Supporting the drama is the electronics, which reinforce the eighth note motor that drives the cadence to its breaking point. The electronics increase this incredible tension with sounds that the author finds reminiscent of air raid sirens or a turbine engine.

At measure 254, the mass soundscape Bryant has been building from almost one hundred measures prior suddenly vanishes. Unlike the majority of the piece where electronic sounds and acoustic sounds meld slowly with one another over expanses of time, this disparate moment separates from the previous music with conclusive quickness.

The soundscape remaining contains only white noise electronics where massive textures previously sounded. The long arrivals of the piece are removed from the listener without warning and with purposeful choice.[41]

Measures 255-267

The remaining measures bookend the second half and are a slightly transposed copy of the closing material of the first half. This final epilogue is written down a step from the matching material earlier in the work at measure 146. The harmonic relationship matches identically to its prior occurrence until measure 262, where Bryant makes the D passing tone and the resultant E more rhythmically grounded by placing them both on strong beats. Also the orchestration of this final phrase becomes new with the addition of the clarinets. With this "halo effect,"[42] Bryant creates a final blending of acoustic and electronic sound. As the final cadence on E major fades, the clarinet sound disappears to niente. Their sounds are absorbed by the pre-recorded acoustic clarinet sounds nested in the electronic track. This happens very gradually over a twenty-five second fermata. As the acoustic clarinets on stage end their sounds, the music morphs into the drone underneath and becomes a part of its texture at the conclusion of the piece. The audience is not aware of this transition as the players on stage are instructed to keep their instruments up until the last release of electronic sound. After fourteen minutes of experimentation and elaboration on nine pitches, Bryant captivates the listener by fading a complex electro-acoustic E major chord into silence.

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[41] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.
[42] Kevin Geraldi, interview by author, Greensboro, July 16, 2013.

CHAPTER IV

REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVES

Insights gained from the rehearsals, recording sessions and premiere performances of this work during the period of time between October 2012 and March 2013 are provided to help others gain deeper knowledge of *Solace*. Future conductors and ensembles may benefit from this three-part examination: considerations for conductors, challenges for specific ensemble parts, and views on the integration of electronics in performance.

Considerations for the Conductor

Solace provides many challenges for the conductor in the rehearsal and performance process. This author recommends providing access to the tone row and a recording for performing ensembles. By copying the nine-pitch row from the inside cover of the score and distributing it with the parts, ensemble members gain an understanding of the row. Further, the ensemble should listen to a recording on quality speakers early in the rehearsal process to hear the context for their individual part and the electronics. Because *Solace* is composed using a tone row, the conductor should frequently emphasize the tonal relationships to the players to avoid the early opinion of *Solace* being a serial work. Also, the players will understand their parts at a deeper level if the technical passages are placed in context of the tone row, Locrian, and natural minor

scales. By combining this knowledge of the row, an initial hearing of the entire work, and the tonality of the piece, players should be prepared to begin their practice.

Two large challenges exist for the conductor in learning the score: the tempi and the harmonic structure of the work. Because of the slow tempo throughout the piece, the decision of whether to conduct the half note or the quarter note is of concern. The conductor must choose which is needed to maintain the drama and flow of the music at every segment of the piece. Towards this endeavor, consult the musical content first, regardless of time signature, as Bryant is known for inserting meter designations to help organize his music, not determine it.[44] The conductor should assist the players with a subdivided two pattern (as opposed to a four pattern) where the quarter note focus is needed, so that the main connection remains with the half-note pulse. In figure 6, the conductor's subdivided two pattern is intended to assist the trumpets, yet keeps the ensemble and listener connected to the moving bass line which outlines the row:

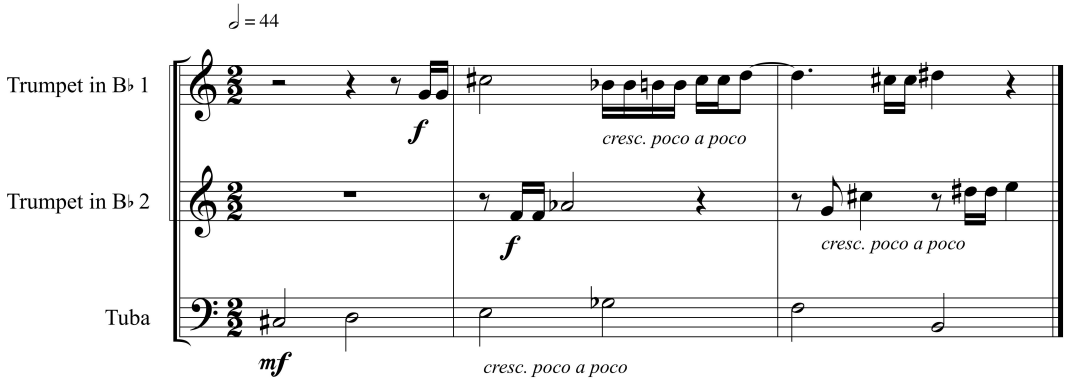

Figure 6. *Solace* measures 114-116. Trumpet 1, trumpet 2 and tuba part in transposed pitch. Used with permission of Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012.

[44] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.

Experimenting and rehearsing will reveal the unique needs for each conductor and ensemble regarding the choice to subdivide. Further, the ensemble must perform the piece at the indicated tempo. Any variation from quarter = 88 (half = 44) will present synchronization issues with the pre-recorded electronics during the sections with the click track. Conversely, other moments in the piece, especially the introduction, should be free, utilizing rubato to shape the drama of the work.

The harmonic function of the work is the other main issue in preparing the score. According to Bryant, he composed using the row as a "free form expression tool" and not strictly "Schoenberg-ian at any point."[45] This renders the post-tonal intervallic analysis method as contrary to the foundation of the piece and affirms the need for vertical harmonic analysis. Every passing tone and dissonance is audible and important. The harmonic structure, therefore, becomes very important to the realization of the work, despite its lack of traditional chord progressions. Many vertical analyses result in chord clusters or quartal harmonies as discussed earlier in chapter three. Therefore, it remains important that the conductor ascertain the resultant vertical harmonies at every point in the composition to guide the ensemble in tuning these non-triadic chords.

The linear aspect of the work, however, must also be analyzed. Through realization of the connections to, or divisions from, the tone row, the conductor ascertains the blended nature of Bryant's melodic writing. Recognizing the truncated statements of the row, such as 5-rows, are vital to the conductor in shaping the melody and highlighting the basic motivic elements of the piece. These melodic connections must be found

[45] Steven Bryant, e-mail to author, June 26, 2013.

through a horizontal viewpoint, which combined with the foundational vertical harmonic analysis lends to a complete understanding of the score.

When planning rehearsals for *Solace*, the conductor should consider many factors that affect the players' endurance and time. The long sustained phrases and extreme tessitura, while present in a few measures and parts, must still be managed appropriately. Care must be taken by the conductor to maximize stamina in the brass and upper woodwinds with fruitful rehearsal segments of these passages. In *Solace*, there are many moments of thin instrumentation texture. These provide variety to the large tutti passages and afford an opportunity for the conductor to plan sectional rehearsals carefully and purposefully. This planning will ensure players' time is managed and valued over the length of the rehearsal. Further, conductors should consider scheduling multiple sectionals during the rehearsal process on six specific areas:

1. The opening flute/clarinet octave duet in measure 5-22.
2. Measures 35-56 involving woodwinds.
3. The trombone section chords beginning at measure 63.
4. The horn/euphonium chorale starting at measure 159.
5. The trumpet fanfare beginning at measure 114.
6. The clarinet and trumpet parts in two related sections: measures 126-136 and 234-254.

Additionally, the keyboard player does not need to be a proficient pianist to perform the part; rather, they are more of an "electronics manager," cueing the chromatic keystrokes written on the music at the proper time. This player is only needed during rehearsals that include the electronics; however, the performer for the piano part is needed at every rehearsal.

The opening flute and clarinet moment is not extremely difficult; however, the exposed duet must be in perfect intonation with the fixed pitch instruments: electronics, piano and mallet percussion. The intervallic leaps are wide, and until the performers are comfortable with hearing the row as a conjunct melody, pitch can be problematic. This section during the pre-premiere rehearsals worked best with the clarinet voice playing one dynamic louder than the printed score in the lower octave. Neither voice should have to force, as the texture clearly allows for a blended piano dynamic duet to project to the back of the performance space.

At measure 35, the clarinets, bass clarinet, alto saxophones, and tenor saxophone play an extended section with close harmonies. Continuing at measure 49, the piano and contrabass voices join and they should also be worked into a sectional format. Vigilant dedication to pitch must be observed by all players, but especially first clarinet, and first alto saxophone because their melody line is doubled in the right hand piano beginning at measure 49. Giving these players the isolated time to tune and be aware of their harmonies will provide huge gains in rehearsal time with the large ensemble. Note also that in the electronics part a static drone of C-sharp, D, E, G-flat sounds throughout the opening part of this section until measure 49. Encourage the acoustic players to match within their own harmonies and allow the natural dissonances to flourish with the electronic drone.

In measures 63 through 77, Bryant writes an important background part in the trombone. These chords must be isolated and tuned with a focus on the resultant chords following the glissandi. Care must be taken to have the harmony change take the full

rhythmic duration of the gliss for maximum effect. Also, matching a gentle articulation style across the section is of utmost importance. The trombone color and shifting harmonies, while secondary to the melody, are paramount to the intended musical drama.

The horn chorale beginning at measure 159 was the first part Bryant composed, and thus is integral to the work. As one of the more exposed parts of the piece, the success of this section is critical to a fine performance. The recommendation, when assigning parts, is that a performer with a strong low register plays fourth horn to provide the necessary harmonic foundation. The euphoniums, which enter at measure 170 and 181, must remain blended into the horn sound. To allow the best use of time, measures 159-200 can be frequently rehearsed in sectionals once the flow of the entire piece is established in the full ensemble.

The trumpet fanfare portion of the piece at measures 114-136 is difficult because of the need to blend and match pitch and timbre. Also, it has many deceptive rhythmic precision issues throughout measures 114-136. The interplay between trumpet 1 and 2 is challenging, as the parts echo one another with imitated rhythm on differing pitches. The resultant intervals are frequently major and minor seconds, which likely will need tuning and an awareness of matching timbre and blend. The repeated phrase at measure 122 may be worked first to gain familiarity. After this has been established, the ensemble should work on the first phrase at measure 114 to achieve the same mastery with the added difficulty of Harmon mutes. In the course of the full rehearsal, this part must be clearly heard with precise matching of articulation, pitch and timbre in all trumpet voices with bells up.

The extended ranges of the trumpet and clarinet parts toward the conclusion of each loud section of the piece also need sectional attention. Because of Bryant's high tessitura writing in these sections, clarinet and trumpet pitch issues may arise. In measures 126 and 127 the clarinets join the trumpet fanfare and must match the articulations of the trumpets and blend into that sound. Conversely, the trumpets should be asked to blend and fit inside the clarinet sound for the remainder of the phrase as the tessitura rises. One may argue if this is possible; however, this focus will assist the tutti ensemble with balance and pitch. At measures 234-254, the challenges are the same. Starting at measure 234, the sections have the same unison line with many players on the row. This opportunity to balance and tune needs to be transferred to the forthcoming excerpt at measures 244-254. Here, the range becomes demanding once more and the opposing pitch tendencies for each section as they crescendo will likely create issues of intonation.[46] Great players will be at a level to counteract this on their own; however, after playing almost fourteen minutes of very demanding music, all ensembles will need some degree of increased focus on pitch in these sections.[47]

Ensemble Member Challenges

Solace contains several challenges for the performers. These challenges lie mostly with issues of balance, blend and tuning, both in wide tessituras and extreme dynamics. However, ensemble members are able to achieve the desired requirements of their parts

[46] This speaks to the natural tendency of the trumpet to go sharp and the clarinet to go flat as each plays louder.
[47] Kevin Geraldi, interview by author, July 16, 2013, and observations of rehearsals and performances by the author during the premiere preparation.

with appropriate work and practice. This examination includes items of concern to specific instruments and issues common to all players in the ensemble.

Throughout the work, balance and blend were considerable challenges for all players in preparation for the premiere performance. At times the balance was unwieldy, with all dynamics marked equally loud and each voice being of equal importance. In sections such as measures 128-136, Bryant utilizes contrapuntal writing to provide clarity to a thick tutti texture with unison loud dynamics. By shifting each of the three competing lines to move at a different rhythmic point in the measure, Bryant helps the clarity. The players, however, must still provide energy and conviction to their rhythmic part to assist in all voices being heard.

In addition to balance, the ensemble will consistently confront tessitura, blend and pitch concerns. The woodwind writing is extremely wide in range, with C-sharp-6 for first clarinet and C-sharp-7 for first flute being the height of the respective range. Also, the brass tessitura is reaching as Bryant writes the first trumpet playing D-flat-6[48] and first trombone playing C-sharp-5[49]. The first and third horns reach C-sharp-5[50] as the high point of their range. The issue is not necessarily range with the horn parts, but rather endurance, as they play the majority of the piece.

To achieve power and drama with the melodic row, Bryant frequently uses many instruments in octave doublings to darken the sound. Utilizing upper woodwinds high in their range, and brass in the lower range, Bryant keeps a wide tutti scoring. At measures

[48] Steven Bryant, *Solace*, score (Gorilla Salad Publications, 2012), measure 142.
[49] Ibid, measure 136.
[50] Ibid.

234-239, Bryant has oboes, Bb clarinets, saxophones, trumpets, horns and first trombone all playing the melody. Within the clarinet and trumpet parts, Bryant writes two parts in the upper octave and one in the lower octave. Fortunately, the lower octave is orchestrated with more players here, compared to other portions of the piece. This allows the dark color to predominate. Despite this advantage, the clarinet and trumpet players must still listen down and work to fit into the lower octaves of their section with timbre and pitch to achieve a blended sound on top of the F-sharp /C-sharp perfect fifth pedal.

Volume and dynamic requirements at the pinnacle of each half of *Solace* demand effort from the ensemble to remain at pitch center. In order to provide a pitch anchor, the piano must be tuned to a D-flat that matches the electronic D-flat heard at measure 145. Of special concern are two moments that must lock into the fixed pitch centers of the piano and electronics. The first occurs at measure 145 where the horns must lower their sounding D-flat, which will be very sharp, and bring it down to the electronics that precede it. The first and third hornists must remain aware of this pitch tendency at the beginning of each ensuing phrase. The second moment occurs in measure 255 with the A-flat minor chord, specifically the C-flat in the first clarinet. In performance practice and the recording sessions, the players found it difficult to bring this pitch into tune due to two compounding factors: 1. The natural pitch tendency of the note, as this is an extremely sharp note on the clarinet. 2. Group pitch had risen due to the high tessitura in measures 251-254 that Bryant writes at the conclusion of a demanding work. Although convention dictates the third of the minor chord to be slightly high, players must anticipate these issues and bring the pitch down accordingly. In conversation with the

players who premiered the work, they shared that they lowered the pitch of the note by putting extra fingers down and also used the 12-second pause moment to discreetly adjust the barrel to bring the pitch back down to A440. Also, the clarinet section will want to work with the performance piano and pianist to learn their tendencies within the A-flat minor chord for the reasons above and also to match the pre-recorded acoustic clarinet echo at the conclusion of the piece.

In summary, ensemble challenges of balance, pitch, blend and tessitura are of paramount concern in *Solace*. Frequent listening down to the lowest sounding voice, matching octave doublings, and vigilant adherence to the piano and electronic pitch will likely ease difficulty and increase success with these inherent challenges.

Electronics: Techniques, Balance and Equipment

Techniques

Over the creation process of *Solace* the electronics interface and execution have undergone multiple revisions resulting in a simple and effective system for future performances. Still, certain technical needs must be considered for rehearsal and performance. The conductor, or an assistant, needs a basic understanding of computers and MIDI connections and a familiar understanding of computer music software such as Ableton Live™. The keyboard player who executes the electronics and the conductor's

assistant must understand how to connect the hardware and operate the setup; however, the complex organizing of the electronics is integrated into the included file.[51]

Bryant has wisely integrated rehearsal aides into the performance track. The start/stop rehearsal aid prevents the need of the keyboard player to work the software interface on the laptop while performing. A specific notated pitch on the staff of the keyboard part represents each electronics cue. Therefore, to start at a specific measure, the player plays the corresponding note as indicated on the electronic keyboard. To stop the sound the player presses the corresponding key. As the piece progresses, the cues are written one half step higher on the staff as a chromatic scale to allow a familiar organizational form for the player. The other rehearsal aide Bryant included is a key sequence to test the click track volume for the conductor earpiece. By pressing the appropriate key, the keyboard sends the click track to the earpiece that the conductor wears to test the volume.

In performance, the click track first enters at measure 181, during the third phrase of the horn and euphonium chorale, as a guide to prepare the tempo for measure 188. The click track is audible to only the conductor via headset earpiece, but syncing the track and music is not necessary until measure 188. Two simultaneous electronic items occur at measure 189: the click track restarts, and the notated noise percussion sounds begin. These percussion sounds are built into the electronic track and sync up with the click

[51] This file is sent with the parts upon rental and included in the optional equipment rental directly from Steven Bryant.

track, requiring the acoustic performers to sync with the electronics beginning at measure 189.

Another technical consideration is the players' need to hear the electronics at performance level. This should be accomplished in the performance space whenever possible because balancing them in a smaller rehearsal space is both inefficient and potentially harmful due to the volume of these sounds. To assist in coordination of cueing the sounds, they can be reduced in volume and still achieve the goal of efficient rehearsal for the keyboard player and conductor. However, as rehearsals progress and electronics are added in the performance space at full volume, the researcher recommends that a non-performing assistant be available to help troubleshoot any issues with the electronics and soundboard to limit interruptions in rehearsal.

Balance

Balance of the electronics to acoustic instruments is not difficult to achieve once the baseline volume level is set in the hall for the electronics. Measures 200-216 and measures 244-254 should be used to check the high level of the electronics. In these moments, the electronics mix and ensemble are at full volume and that should provide the proper opportunity to set the peak electronics level.

Early in the piece, the electronics should be "felt more than heard"[52] and are ambient in nature. As the work progresses, they become more of an equal partner with the acoustic instruments; however, at no point, should the acoustics be completely absent

[52] Stephen Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.

from the soundscape. This will require adjustments from players and the sound technician to guarantee that all contributing voices may be also heard at the bigger moments of the piece.

Frequently, the sound level of the electronics needs to be loud to support the musical intentions of the composer. Combinations of white noise, dissonance, and sounds reminiscent of an aircraft takeoff are extremely raucous and Bryant indicates that, "If (the electronics) causes a feeling of angst, or (an) uncomfortable listening environment that is both (acceptable) and intended."[53] The conductor and soundboard operator should work collaboratively to create this intention.

In the performances for the premieres in October 2012 and March 2013, the composer was in attendance and was able to manipulate the electronics balance using his iPad from the audience. That information was utilized to adjust written dynamics for the players; however, revising the electronic track to account for these level adjustments is not practical as each ensemble and performance space will be different. Therefore, having a sound specialist available during rehearsals and performance to monitor and adjust the electronic levels at the soundboard is vital.

Equipment

When considering performing *Solace*, the conductor should study what sound system is present in the performance space. The system must be able to handle the wide range of bass to treble frequency response in the electronics. The piece cannot be realized

[53] Ibid.

on a smaller portable P.A. system; rather, the range of electronics writing necessitates the very best speakers available. The source material is an electronics track, sent to the sound system as a stereo left/right mix. When run through the standard large speaker with subwoofer setup, this will tell the pass-through when to send the signal to the subwoofer.[55] This is an improvement from the electronics track used in *Ecstatic Waters.* The electronics translate accurately to the listener in *Solace* with the convenience of a single stereo mix.

Recommended placement for the main speaker towers is the back of the stage behind the ensemble. The electronics are sent into the audience through the ensemble because of the ensemble need to match pitch and fade in/out of the electronic texture. Due to the sheer volume and pitch registration of some of the electronic sounds, hearing protection is a necessity for the players in the back of the ensemble closest to the speakers. Ideally the towers can be situated in the back of the stage on the perimeter of the ensemble to minimize the effect on the players. Monitors for the ensemble may still be a necessity depending upon the unique acoustics of each performance space.

The keyboard part requires an 88 key instrument that accepts a MIDI signal from the interface box connected to the laptop[56] operating the software. With the laptop, MIDI interface, 88-key keyboard, output to the headphone amplifier for the conductor earpiece, and the output to the main speakers and monitors, the setup is complete.

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[55] Steven Bryant, e-mail to author, July 2013.
[56] The author recommends contacting Steven Bryant to discuss using one of his laptop setups or to confirm technical specifications of your personal setup.

The conductor will need a high quality earpiece but one that does not detract from hearing the rest of the ensemble. Since the only sound present in the earpiece is the click track for a brief portion of the piece, an over-the-ear earpiece on one ear is recommended to allow both ears to clearly hear the ensemble.[57] The conductor earphone receives its signal from a headphone amplifier with independent volume control placed near the conductor stand. A monitor for the conductor is necessary so that she/he may hear the electronic mix. It will likely be necessary for the conductor to turn the headphone amplifier to its maximum volume to hear the click track over the ensemble. This must be done at the beginning, as there is no opportunity during the piece for the conductor to adjust volume.

[57] Kevin Geraldi, interview by author, Greensboro, July 16, 2013.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Implications for Further Research

New research into *Solace* is applicable, as each new performance will bring new interpretations to the forefront. Bryant's music continues to be valued, as evidenced by the appearance of his music on concert programs internationally and the growing number of commissions. Research on these new commissions will surely be of interest to the wind music community, regardless of the presence or absence of electro-acoustic sounds. These new works may provide an opportunity for future researchers to look back upon *Solace* with a different lens.

Conclusions

Solace has many facets to its composition that are common to wind ensemble music or music in general: dissonance, motivic development, drama, and use of electronic sounds with acoustic sounds. What is notable, however, is the high level of craft that is exhibited by Bryant in this composition. Bryant composed a highly organized work with a very small amount of musical material. Throughout the piece, this material is developed, reimagined and used in a referential manner to itself. Providing motivic connection to source material is not a new compositional tool, but Bryant executes this to a high level of success, evidenced by the form of the piece and this author's analysis. The

choice to record acoustic sound and weave it in and out of live acoustic sound gives a sense of life to the electronic part and puts it on an equal level of importance to the live players in the ensemble. Bryant uses purely electronic sounds to meld with the acoustic and thereby creates a new soundscape. This new sound is what engages a listener from the outset. For Bryant, electronic sounds are not a novelty, but a coordinated integrative partner in the wind ensemble medium, just as the brass is to the woodwinds. For performer and listener, the boundaries between electronic and acoustic sound are reduced and the wind ensemble has a new infinite palate of timbres, tone colors and sound possibilities with electro-acoustic composition. Composers before Bryant have certainly contributed to this palate, but Bryant's love of electronics and non-art music influences have led his music to be unique, vibrant and culturally relevant in the modern wind ensemble repertoire.

Solace provides opportunity for personal expression and interpretation by each new conductor and performing ensemble. Through the long introduction comprised of rubato moments of chamber music playing, the larger tutti moments and the closing quieter respites, Bryant's piece accomplishes his intention of "intense drama for all."[58]

[58] Steven Bryant, interview by author, Greensboro, September 18, 2012.

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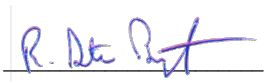
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORMS

Interview Release and Waiver

I, Steven Bryant, do hereby give permission to be interviewed for the dissertation project "Solace: A New piece for Wind Ensemble". I understand that excerpts from the interview and my name will be used in the dissertation document as primary source information.



Interviewee (Steven Bryant)

_____

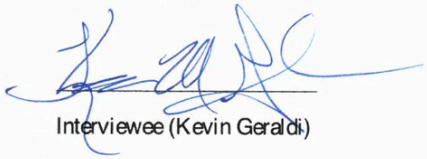
Interviewer (Justin Davis)

____September 18, 2012_____

date

Interview Release and Waiver

I, Kevin Geraldi, do hereby give permission to be interviewed for the dissertation project "Solace: A New piece for Wind Ensemble". I understand that excerpts from the interview and my name will be used in the dissertation document as primary source information.



Interviewee (Kevin Geraldi)

Interviewer (Justin Davis)

July 16, 2013

date

APPENDIX B

COMMISSIONING CONSORTIUM

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